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THE GREAT DESIRE by Alexander Black. Published by Harper Brothers.

"The Great Desire." by Alexander Black, is a disconcerting book in more ways than one. In it our traditional ingentousness struggles hard to maintain itself on ground sandpapered to a treacherous alipperiness by rough and realistic modern philosophy. Mr. Black has reached that point of sophistication where he knows inhibitions to be bad form. He insists he has none. He makes free and adventurous gestures in the direction of all modern heresies. But they are mere pivetal turns. In point of fact he stands rooted in the affect and strictest constructions of law and order.

It is hard to resist speculating what The Great Desire" would have been if the war had not been injected into its theme. Would the impression have prevailed of Mr. Black as some on urbane and sophisticated and ironic, some one who had brought the distinction of the critical spirit to recent American fiction? So much of it is beautifully written, so much of it is weary to hasgine how delightful it would have been if the clear flow of the tale had not been dammed by the war. The war itself remains throughout an unassimilated substance in the chemistry of the story. It

curiosity in a world made up of all sorts of dissenters. He finally betrays the puritan's passion for the definite appraisal. For this there is no better measuring stick than the war, and Mr. Black applies it with remorseless effect. The war is definitely something which divides the sheep from the goats. All who are worth their salt in the book have no moment of uncertainty about the moral problems it arouses. They lie, beg and steal, if necessary, in order to enlist. Those who stop to talk of art, of labor of philosophy are slackers and dangerous radicals who stand in the way of civilization. Sending him away with a smile, the flag in the window, cursing the Hun—these are the simple signs of spiritual grace. The crippled hero, being rejected from army service, finds a young workingman who is mad to get at the Hun, but who is restrained by the consideration of a wife and child. The hero, in a moment of nobility, makes it possible for him to go by offering to take care of his wife and child. The wife resents this interference bitterly, but the insignificant quality of her resentment is established by the fact that she turns out to be a thoroughly depraved creature anyway.

All Mr. Black's very considerable talent is obscured by the heavy sententiousness of his social perceptions. The atory itself, never very substantial, goes off at loose ends and is finally retrieved in hasty fragments in a not too tidy ending.

If, as William Dean Howells has trieved in hasty ring.

tidy ending.

If, as William Dean Howells has said, "The Great Desire" is cloquent of the American spirit, it is also cloquent of what its limitations are in R. D.

In the Near East

Kermit Roosevelt Tells Of War in Mesopotamia

WAR IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN BY Kermit Roosevelt, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

Few episodes of the war were more picturesque than the British advance against the Turks in Mesopotamia: the gradual occupation of the Tigris and Euphrates valleys, the capture of such historic cities as Bagdad and Jerusalem. historic cities as Bagdad and Jerusalem. Captain Roosevelt did not participate in any of the most important engagements on this front; his period of service there fell between Maude's offensive against Jerusalem. However, he was under fire in several vigorous skirmishes; and he gives an excellent account of the open fighting, with frequent cavalry raids, which characterized the operations in this region. Captain Roosevelt's description of the features of the Mesopotamian country, of the tates manners and habits of its inhabitants, recalls his father's gift of lucid and entertaining marration. With

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O Wingless victory!

Professor Clarke is nothing if not a learning we are thankful to say, oward the simpler, lyrical note, cancis Ledwidge and Katherine Tynan ave five peems each, more than any ther poet, and the poems amply justify his honor. There is more of the war a caim, simple lines of Ledwidge, peaking of things remote from the costile line, painting combat only by addrection, than in all of Robert Kichola's groans and screams and dots and exclamation points. The realist letter poetry.

no munition makers?

We come back to Professor Clarke's generous eelecticism as the source of a generous electicism as the source of any such definitive selection of representatives as this small volume attempts. We must read and browse and reflect, and discard and discover for a generation or so before the poetry of the great war falls into its true rating. In the meantime the personal collection, representing a point of view or a plea, or the ample and all-embracing anthology is better company and often better poetry.

G. P.

Portmanteau Plays

Romantic Appeal in New Dramas by Stuart Walker

author.

The author gives a brief sketch of his experiences with the American army in France, to which he was transferred in the spring of 1918, in the concluding chapter of the book. Full of anecdotes and written with rare descriptive skill, Captain Roosevelt's work may well take rank as one of the most enjoyable war books of the year.

"The Lady of the Weeping Willow Tree" is a charming fantasy based upon Japanese folklore. Oban-San is an old woman, leavy of leart because she has never known the love of children. A gake, or evil spirit, who feeds upon human misery attempts to forment her attill further by allowing her to enjoy a daugnter for a moticult and then snatching the girl nawy and giving her

ing behind a curtain in a very printitive costume.

"Jonathun Makes a Wist," the most serious of the three plays, is a new version of the cold tragedy of an imaginative, impressionable boy subjected to the unconsciou, cruelty of a well-acaning but stupid and tyrannical relative. Jonathan is a fourteen-year old-boy with a passion for writing plays. The Eskimos were blinded by superstition. The doctor was ence asked to charm a tooth instead of pulling the boy and the hard, inflexible will of the older man has in it the elements of a tragedy, when Jonathan suddenly finds a savior in his uncle Nathautel, who had run away from John's tyranny himself when he was a boy.

Mr. Walker handles his theme very Mr. Walker handles his theme very and a menth later declared he had not had an ache since the performance. His sense of humor is shown in attories scattered through the book. One concerns a minister whose impediment and dauntless downers has a widowed lausiter.

Mr. Walker handles his theme very effectively. Avoiding all affectation and saccharine sentimentality, he draws a convincing picture of the ardens, imaginative boy, driven desperate by the idea of being forced to work which he leather. The most powerful passages of the play are to be found in the second act, which describes Jonathan's delirious dreams

after he has suffered a fall in attempting to run away. The boy imagines that he has become a humpback through his fall and sees himself going about among his former relatives vainly seeking for a single mark of by Stewart & Rose Comparison.

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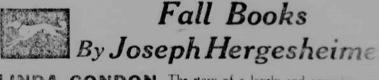
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